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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: LIBERIA

LIBERIA

¶1. "Share the burden"

The conservative National Post opined (8/1): "Liberia's 14-year-old civil war may finally be ending. Last Wednesday, the country's giant neighbour, Nigeria, agreed to send 1,300 peacekeepers to help end hostilities.... On Monday, the European Union voiced support for a multilateral intervention -- but did not promise funding for it. Also on Monday, Ottawa pledged \$1.75-million in humanitarian assistance to displaced Liberians. We find it interesting, however, that these moves came only after George W. Bush's July 4 decision to send military observers to the war-plagued nation. Two thousand U.S. Marines and three U.S. naval ships are now en route to West Africa. This sequence of events typifies the international community's standard operating procedure when it comes to humanitarian emergencies. It waits for the United States to agree to do the heavy lifting, and then parcels out the less onerous tasks. But U.S. manpower, capital and political will have limits. Washington cannot be expected to bear the burden of intervention during every crisis. What the world needs is what international relations theorists call 'burden sharing.' Responsibility for global public goods - such as international stability, or the care and feeding of refugees - must be carried by a coalition of wealthy, Western states.... Today's burden shirking may exact a high price tomorrow. Isolationism always has a significant constituency in the United States. And if ordinary Americans gets the sense that their country's goodwill is being exploited by other nations, they will retreat from trouble spots like sub-Saharan Africa and the Balkans entirely - emerging only to fight wars that suit Washington's self-interest. The better strategy is for Europe and Canada to ante up now, before it's too late."

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